

FRIENDS OF PERRY LAKES

NEWSLETTER

January 2026



Message from the Chair

The last year has been a productive one for Friends of Perry Lakes (FoPL) and 2026 is shaping up to be even better. We have secured a Community Organisation Support Grant from the Town of Cambridge (ToC) to improve information boards and FoPL signage in the Reserve and, furthermore, there have been very exciting developments for the Citizen Science programme, which Brett and Don will be informing everyone about.

The value of our efforts to the community became apparent to me during a recent walk around the Lakes, when I came across a turtle walking back to the south end of East Lake, presumably after laying eggs. While taking a video of the turtle, I was approached by a young woman and her daughter who were absolutely thrilled about seeing a turtle. I told her something about the oblong/long-necked turtles in the Reserve and about the information on our website. She asked me to send her a copy of my video, which I did. She replied to inform me that her two sons also enjoyed watching the video and that her children were so excited to know that they could see animals like this close to their home.

For me, this encounter was a good example of what FoPL is assisting ToC to do. Through targeted revegetation and control of invasive weeds, as well as monitoring of lake water quantity and quality, we aim to improve the natural environment for native animal species and, consequently, provide an opportunity for the local community to observe native animals and plants in their natural environment.

That process, however, sometimes produces challenges. For example, recent electrofishing in West Lake, arranged by ToC, resulted in the disappointing, but not unexpected, finding that not a single native fish was detected. In addition, about 800 carp were removed, though very few were mature fish. While it is currently unclear what the long-term consequences of this problem will be and how it should be addressed, it would seem important to monitor carp abundance and the relationship with markers of water quality that are currently being examined by our citizen scientists.

Martyn French - chair@friendsofperrylakes.org



Martyn French
Chair

STRATEGIC PLAN

As we enter our fifth year, we will continue benchmarking our performance working towards our 2030 Vision statement. To find out more, please visit our website [here](#).

GET IN TOUCH

Follow or join all our sites and like, comment and share our posts. As always your questions and comments on any post are welcome. See page 10 of this newsletter to have your say on our future communications.



Membership renewal

Your membership funds vital conservation work, citizen science and community events that protect this unique ecosystem.

Not a member yet? Join today and help shape the future of Perry Lakes. Members enjoy free entry to educational talks and nature walks, complimentary or discounted catering at weeding and planting events and many more benefits. To join follow [this link](#).



AGM and 2026 Committee

Thank you to the members who attended our November AGM. The evening kicked-off in great style, thanks to free pizzas and an open bar. The venue was terrific and the staff at Cambridge Bowling Club couldn't have been more helpful. Our new committee for 2026 was elected and we're delighted to welcome Caroline Mitchell as Secretary.

We're also excited to share a refreshed committee structure designed to better support our members and strengthen our connection with the community. These changes set us up to deliver more opportunities to learn, connect and get involved in the years ahead. Most importantly, our renewed focus will maximise opportunities to take advantage of the Community Stewardship Grant which we are announcing in the coming pages.

What's New?

The newly created Events Coordinator role reflects our commitment to bringing people together. Nolan Penning takes on this role with a strong focus on keeping our members and community informed, educated and entertained. From 2026, you can expect more educational events on topics that matter to our community, alongside the return of our much-loved social events, with a few new surprises thrown in.

The former Education Officer role has been renamed Science Officer, a change that better reflects the scope and expertise of the position. In this role, Don will focus on the scientific and educational aspects of our Citizen Science program. Our goal is to ensure Citizen Scientists learn valuable skills to whatever level they are comfortable with.

The former Promotions role has been broadened into Communications, allowing us to improve how we connect with you across digital platforms and through face-to-face engagement. In 2026, much work will be done to streamline our processes, to better share our knowledge and to provide access to our data to the wider community.

Overall, these changes are about one thing: creating more opportunities for our community to learn, connect and be involved. We're looking forward to what's ahead and hope you'll join us along the way.

Your 2025-26 Committee



Martyn French
Chair



Peter Griffiths
Deputy Chair



Caroline Mitchell
Secretary



Cathy Wallace
Treasurer



Don McFarlane
Science



Tony Harding
Works



Andrew Burbidge
Wildlife



Nolan Penning
Events



Brett Heil
Communications

Friends of Perry Lakes awarded NRM Community Stewardship (CS) Grant

We're pleased to advise that Friends of Perry Lakes has been successful in securing a CS Grant from the Western Australian Government's State Natural Resource Management (NRM) Program.

This funding supports something many of us have been working towards - a fully fledged Citizen Science program to better understand and monitor the ecology of Perry Lakes. It builds directly on the volunteer effort, observations and care that our members already contribute, and helps us turn that commitment into a structured, long-term monitoring program.

With this support, over the next 18 months we'll be able to:

- Train members and volunteers in ecological monitoring
- Collect and share data on water levels, water quality and wildlife
- Improve how we make information available to our community
- Host regular member and community events to learn, monitor and connect

Most importantly, this project strengthens our collective voice by providing credible, shared evidence about how Perry Lakes is changing and what it needs to remain healthy into the future.

If you're interested in getting more involved - as a Citizen Scientist, event participant or supporter, we'd love you to register your interest via our website or keep an eye on upcoming announcements [here](#), on the special project page on our website..

Thank you to all our members whose ongoing support makes projects like this possible, and to the Western Australian Government's State NRM Program for backing community-led stewardship at Perry Lakes.



Be part of Perry Lakes Citizen Science

With support from our new Community Science grant, we're expanding our Citizen Science program giving members the chance to be part of a community effort that will set the standard for how local environmental data is collected and used.

No science background needed. You'll learn what to look for, contribute simple observations, and help build the evidence that supports better care of Perry Lakes.

If you'd like to be involved in something practical, meaningful, and done properly, register your interest via [this link](#).

Message from the Science Officer

Lake water levels and management in 2025

Impact of the wet 2025 Winter on lake levels

The wet winter experienced in 2025 resulted in both lakes reaching similar water levels after the balance pipe began transferring water from West Lake to East Lake in late July. The maximum water levels in 2025 (4.4m above sea level) were 60 to 80 centimetres higher than previous years, which increased water depths rather than area inundated given the steep banks created prior to the 1962 Commonwealth Games. The deeper levels contributed to fewer wading birds in the early summer. It is expected that water levels in East Lake will decline more rapidly in early 2026 once the balance pipe ceases to transfer water between the lakes.



Dr Don McFarlane

Performance of Herdsman Main Drain Pumping System

Throughout 2025, the pumping of water from the Herdsman Main Drain remained much lower than the design specifications, mirroring the results observed in 2024. This reduction in performance was probably due to the accumulation of debris in the intake, which has only been cleaned once since the pump's installation. The Town is investigating the causes of poor performance, which appear to stem from both system breakdowns and the low pumping rates. Despite these issues, the water transferred to West Lake in both 2024 and 2025 has played an important role in maintaining higher water levels than would have occurred without such intervention. The deeper water in 2025 may have reduced the area being covered by young reeds – both *Typha* and *Schoenoplectus*.

Electrofishing and fish populations

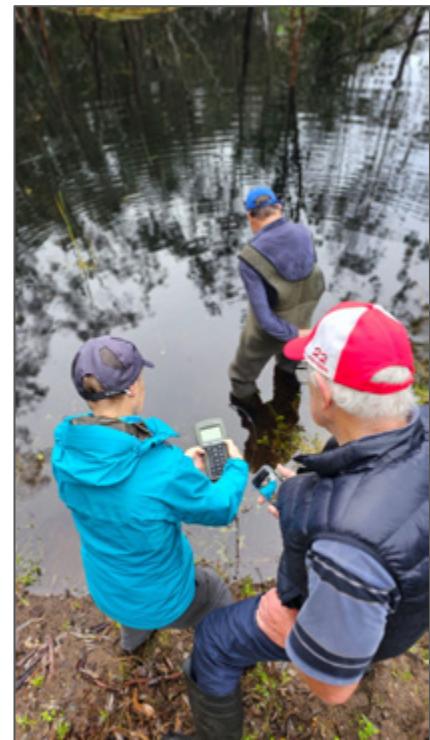
Electrofishing funded by the Town of Cambridge in West Lake resulted in the removal of 7 large carp, 794 juveniles, and an adult pearl cichlid. Most were captured in the deeper northern parts of the lake, where citizen scientists conducting water quality monitoring have found higher dissolved oxygen levels—conditions essential for fish survival. The relatively low number of adult fish suggests that West Lake may not provide a suitable environment for large populations of carp, as carp eggs introduced in early 2023 should have produced a much larger population by now. Nonetheless, the observation of large carp since electrofishing indicates that it alone is not sufficient to eradicate the species from the lake.



Water Quality Monitoring

Monthly water quality monitoring using an instrument provided by the Town was carried out between June and November 2025 at up to eight sites in the lakes. Over this period the lakes filled and started to decline. The main trends detected were:

- Dissolved oxygen levels increased as oxygenated water entered from stormwater drains before starting to decline.
- Lake areas close to drains had decreased salinities before rising again in the early summer. The salinity of East Lake is usually much higher than West Lake. When the balance pipe brings fresher West Lake water into East Lake, salinities become similar.
- Oxidation reduction potentials (ORP) fell as the lakes filled, possible because peat had been exposed over the previous summer. Some of these areas had high phosphorus and low oxygen levels, and outbreaks of the water fern, *Azolla*.



An increase in acidity during winter before a recovery in summer. Oxygenation of dry peat over summer may have released organic acids. Shallow and deep measurements were taken where water levels were sufficiently deep. Even over 60cm, dissolved oxygen and ORP can decrease significantly, while turbidity increases with depth.

Friends of Perry Lakes purchased a phosphorus meter during the year to monitor this element, the main cause of eutrophication and toxic algal blooms in fresh water. Several readings greatly exceeded a trigger level for concern about eutrophication. Levels of P in the Herdman Main Drain have increased to about these trigger level. We estimate about 70 kg of P is being introduced each year by the diversion.

The deeper water in 2025 may have reduced the area of covered in germinating reeds – both *Typha* and *Schoenoplectus*.

Grant Funding

The state CS Grant will assist Citizen Scientists with equipment for sampling, water analysis costs, and storing- analysing- and presenting-data. Time and spatial data will be able to be combined. See Page 10 for further details.

Goals for 2026

- ★ Automate water level monitoring for both lakes.
- ★ Refine the water quality monitoring program to answer specific questions such that annual cycles can be assessed.
- ★ Get real time weather, water levels and water quality onto the FoPL website.
- ★ Combine water and fauna data to interpret relationships.
- ★ We hope to progressive refine a feasible water level management plan that optimises environmental, aesthetic and threat objectives for each lake.

Message from the Wildlife Officer

By Dr Andrew Burbidge AO

Information on the wildlife of the Perry Lakes reserve continues to improve. The [FoPL website](#) has a wealth of information about the wildlife of the lakes and surrounds.

Quenda observations show they are now widespread, having arrived at Perry Lakes a few years ago from Lake Claremont via Bold Park. Quenda diggings are evident in places, especially on the eastern side of East Lake where dense vegetation provides cover from predators and disturbance by people.

There have been observations of oblong turtle females nesting, and moving to and from nesting. In many Perth Metropolitan lakes and swamps, female oblong turtles have become rare due to predation by foxes or dogs, or road kills while nesting away from water, resulting in many more males than females.

Members (and others) are contributing waterbird observations to FoPL via the BirdLife Australia app 'Birddata'. As more observations come in we should be able to start correlating species presence (or absence) with water depth and season and eventually lake water quality and the presence of food sources and toxic algae (if a bloom occurs). We hope that members will add to the bird observations: instructions are on the FoPL website.

Recently, Pink-eared Ducks, an unusual duck with no close relatives, have been observed at Perry Lakes. Blue-billed Ducks, a diving duck, prefer deeper water and are present at Perry Lakes now that the lakes have deep water. On the other hand, wading birds have been uncommon due to the lack of shallow water.



By Dr Andrew Burbidge AO



Photos:

Top - Quenda captured by member Clive Addison

Above - female snake neck turtle finding her way across open ground and

Left - the unusual Pink-eared duck has been recently observed at Perry Lakes.

Message from the Works Coordinator

While our monthly weeding sessions pause over the height of summer, our dedicated Weed Warriors continue to make a meaningful impact across the Reserve. Each Tuesday, the group heads into the park for targeted weeding activities, followed by a well-earned morning tea at Cup & Co. Over the past year, this regular rhythm has fostered a strong sense of camaraderie, and their ongoing efforts play an important role in ensuring our plantings remain healthy and continue to thrive.

We expect our monthly weeding sessions to recommence in March 2026. Looking ahead, planning is already underway for Plantfest 2026, which promises to be bigger and better than ever, with a few surprises along the way.

We invite you to join us in 2026 for any of our activities. Whether you're keen to get your hands dirty or would prefer to simply join the group for morning tea afterwards, you'll be warmly welcomed. It's a relaxed and enjoyable way to meet other members, connect with our growing community, and see first-hand the impact of the work being done on the Reserve.

Finally, please visit the events page on our website [here](#), for the latest information on all upcoming events.



By Tony Harding



When dogs and wildlife do mix

Conservation detection dogs are now being used to locate and monitor native freshwater turtle nests along sections of the River Murray.

This initiative forms part of South Australia's first-ever turtle management strategy, which aims to better understand why turtle populations are declining and identify actions to help protect them.

The two-year project is funded through to June 2027, when the state's full turtle management strategy is set to be released.

This is a fascinating development and one which our Citizen Scientists will be keeping a keen eye on.

Members can read more about the project and its progress [here](#).

Off-lead dogs in Perry Lakes

Large dogs have recently been observed ferreting around in the understory where our quenda are thriving.

If you notice dogs roaming off-lead around the park there are a couple of things you could do. You could politely remind the owner that dogs are only permitted to be off-lead in the dog area which is designed to protect our wildlife. Providing context often helps understanding. Alternatively, send a message to Town of Cambridge.

Message from the Events Officer

We're excited to share what's shaping up to be a big, hands-on year for the Friends of Perry Lakes community in 2026.

Our major focus will be Plantfest 26, where we'll come together in early June to plant another 5,000 native plants over several days. This is a real community effort that has a huge impact on the park.

Throughout the year we'll also be getting out and about together with three guided walks:

- **March/April** - exploring local plants and birdlife
- **September** - a popular frog night stalk
- **November** - a "Future Visions" walk, where we'll share ideas and talk about what's next for revegetation and park improvements

To keep spirits high through winter, we're planning a fun quiz night in August, complete with prizes, followed by two relaxed evening talks with inspiring, nature-focused speakers.

Be sure to keep an eye out for the regular meetings updating the community with progress on our Community Stewardship Grant project.

As always, we'll make our AGM in mid-October a social occasion (yes - drinks and pizza will be on offer!), and we'll round out the year with an early Christmas BBQ and casual cricket get-together in late November.

All in all, this will be our biggest year yet for social events offering a variety of ways for you to meet members of the FoPL community.



Nolan Penning
Events



Above - The famous sausage sizzle at Plantfest25 and below - another sold out education event.



What are you doing next Tuesday morning?

Here's your chance to get your hands dirty, do something good for Perry Lakes and enjoy great company while you're at it! Join Weed Warriors for a relaxed, feel-good Tuesday morning, making a real difference in the Reserve. We meet at The Shed from 8am, spend some time caring for the bush, then reward ourselves with a coffee and catch-up at Cup & Co.



For more information contact [Tony](#) or visit our website [here](#).



Message from the Communications Officer

A new chapter for Perry Lakes and our community begins now.

Thanks to the CS Grant, 2026 is shaping up to be a landmark year. We will undertake the biggest transformation of our digital platforms since inception and make our findings publicly available. This will be no mean feat, with work planned to include a new look website and a backend database that will support our Citizen Scientists as they come to record, analyse and understand the ecology of our lakes. In addition, growing our Citizen Science community will be essential in ensuring a sustainable future for the programs we establish.

With our strategic focus will come a new look for FoPL offering a more contemporary and consistent brand across our communications and media platforms. We also want to create platforms that are accessible and at the same time enhancing opportunities for our community to engage in the science of our lakes.

Photography is also an important part of our strategy as we showcase our magical reserve to the wider community. We're very lucky to have Ian Stewart and Harrison Osgarby supporting us with their exceptional photos, but we could always do with more. So, if you're a budding photographer and would like to contribute high-quality images of any aspect of Perry Lakes from the lakes, to the animals to the recreation areas, please get in touch with me on the email below.

Email: comms@friendsofperrylakes.org



Brett Heil
Communications

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR A TROVE OF INFORMATION

The FoPL website is a valuable resource for information on events, membership, our vision, flora and fauna around the lakes as well as educational videos.

Visit:

friendsofperrylakes.org

Have your say

We're working on a new website and would really like your input. What would make it more useful for you? What information should be easier to find, and what features would you actually use?

We're also keen to hear your thoughts on our social media and communications more generally – what updates matter most to you, how often you'd like to hear from us, and whether there are events or activities you'd like to see more of.

Your feedback will help us shape how we share information and stay connected, so it better reflects our community and supports the long-term care of Perry Lakes. Most importantly, we want it to feel like a place where you can be involved in caring for the lakes in a way that suits you, whether that's staying informed or getting hands-on. Send us your suggestions to comms@friendsofperrylakes.org

